



**File Code:** 1570

**Date:** July 11, 2018

Dear Forest User:

The Pomeroy Ranger District invites you to collaborate or comment on the proposed Upper Pataha Project. This project is being implemented under the 2014 Farm Bill, Section 603, Insect and Disease Categorical Exclusion (CE). As part of that process we are looking for individuals and/or groups who are interested in helping to shape and identify management issues or concerns as we develop alternatives and work towards a final decision memo.

The project is located in Garfield County, Washington within portions of T 9 N, R 42 E, Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 27, 28, 29, 32, 33, T 8 N, R 42 E, Sections 4, 5 (see attached map), and located within the Headwaters Pataha Creek sub-watershed. This project is approximately 20 road miles SE of Pomeroy, Washington. All in the Garfield County Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).

### **Background**

The Upper Pataha project consists of a mix of previously harvested young stands and several mature and late seral stands. Many of the younger stands were created by past timber harvest and the older stands are at a higher density than they would be historically due to fire suppression. Dense stands result in competition for both light and available moisture and prevent reproduction of the shade-intolerant early seral species such as ponderosa pine and larch. Most stands require a thinning of some type to return them to densities nearer the lower level of full stocking. Density reduction improves tree vigor and resilience, and when certain non-host species are targeted for retention, can reduce the prevalence of dwarf mistletoe, root rots or insect infestation.

Species composition in many stands trends to the late seral grand fir, although there are often ponderosa pine and western larch overstory present that could be retained as seed trees. In some stands there is viable pine and larch reproduction or second-growth that could be preserved for the succeeding stand.

The Upper Pataha Project is being planned under the 2018 Umatilla National Forest Land Management Plan. Management Areas within the projects area include MA 4A General Forest, MA 4B Riparian Management Areas, and MA 5 Developed Sites and Administrative Areas. All of these areas allow for silvicultural treatment consistent with the desired conditions of the management areas.

### **Purpose and Need**

The purpose for the Upper Pataha project is reduce densities and alter species composition to reduce risk and mitigate insects and disease infestation and promote the growth of larger trees in the Pataha Creek Sub-Watershed. This will be accomplished by managing stand densities and compositions to closer resemble historic range of variability to be more resilient to insect and disease incursions.

A need is to design the project to make the landscape more resilient to fire disturbance through management of hazardous fuels. Another need is to sustain local economies, including local forest products industries by supplying forest products. Approximately 2600 acres of overstocked and/or insect and disease infested stands have been identified in need of treatment. The proposed project area is

considered to be in Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) by the Garfield County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP).

## **Proposed Action**

### ***Thinning/Timber Harvest***

To implement the purpose and need, commercial timber harvest and non-commercial thinning is planned to manage stand density, structure and species composition in the project area. Overcrowding of stands also creates intense competition among trees for water and nutrients, which in turn causes stress. This makes stands highly susceptible to further insect and disease infestations, more prone to large wildfires and less desirable for wildlife and recreational activities. By thinning overstocked timber stands, it will improve stand composition and structure and decrease the chance of disease or insect outbreak.

Timber harvest will be done utilizing existing road systems, with a majority of the project area being ground based, with the rest being skyline or hand thinning units. Connected actions will be disposal of slash created by the harvest operations. This will be achieved through the burning of landing piles and possible grapple piling of slash within units. There will also be removal of imminent and likely danger trees along haul routes.

## **Instructions for Collaboration and Making Comments**

As the District begins this effort and planning process, I would appreciate anyone's involvement in the collaborative process. The District has set dates for two meetings/field trips to meet with anyone who would be interested in collaborating about management options within the Upper Pataha Sub-Watershed. Table 1. Describes the anticipated timeline.

Table 1. Anticipated Timeline

Collaborative Field Trip	August 16, 2018
Collaborative Field Trip	September 6, 2018
Specialist Reports	December 2018
Signed Decision Memo	February 2018

If you are interested in collaborating on the project please respond by July 31, 2018. If you are not interested in attending the collaborative field trip, but would like to comment on the project please submit them by August 14, 2018. Specific, written comments are most helpful when they identify issues, highlight cause and effect relationships of the proposed action, or refine the action to protect resources or interests while allowing us to be responsive to the purpose and need.

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, and electronic comments should be submitted to: Monte Fujishin, District Ranger, 71 West Main Street, Pomeroy, WA 99347. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are: 7:30 AM to 4:30 PM Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Comments can be faxed to 509-843-4621. Oral comments must be provided at the district office during normal business hours via telephone or in person. If you choose to contact us by phone the number is 509-843-1891. Electronic comments should be submitted as part of the actual e-mail message or as an attachment in Microsoft Word, rich text format, or portable document format only and sent to

[comments-pacificnorthwest-umatilla-pomeroy@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-pacificnorthwest-umatilla-pomeroy@fs.fed.us). For electronically mailed comments the sender should receive an automated electronic acknowledgement from the agency as confirmation of receipt. If the sender does not receive this confirmation of receipt it is the sender's responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means. E-mails submitted to e-mail addresses other than the one listed above, in other formats than those listed, or containing viruses will not be accepted.

Participants who submit comments on the Upper Pataha Project may receive future correspondence on this project. In order to reduce paperwork and costs, those who do not comment will not receive future updates on this project unless they sign up on the mailing list on the project web page at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=54327>. On the right side of the webpage under "Get Connected" click on "Subscribe to Email Updates." Alternatively, they can contact Johnny Collin, North Zone Timber Management Assistant, to be signed up on the mailing list (see contact information below). Project updates can be viewed at the project website listed above at any time as well.

If you have questions concerning the project or how to submit comments, please contact Johnny Collin, North Zone Timber Management Assistant by email: [jcollin@fs.fed.us](mailto:jcollin@fs.fed.us) or by phone: 509-843-4643.

Thank you for your interest in the Umatilla National Forest and would very much appreciate your collaboration in the development of this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Monte Fujishin", with a horizontal line underneath it.

MONTE FUJISHIN

District Ranger